

**Arizona Department of Public Safety
Arizona Department of Health Services
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Arizona Division of Emergency Management**



**Management Guidelines for Responders to
Suspected Biological Agent/Suspicious Powder Incidents
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Editorial Note: *The use of bold type indicates the item is a point of emphasis.*

OVERVIEW:

Operational Guidelines for the Management of Suspected Anthrax Exposure and other Suspicious Powder Incidents:

The following guidelines have been recommended to ensure coordination of law enforcement response to terrorist threats or incidents. This information is intended to assist you in managing suspicious incidents and/or answering questions from the general public.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is the lead investigative agency on all **actual** bioterrorism incidents or credible threats and will respond to all incidents of this type. While the FBI has the lead investigative role, the first response will generally come from the local jurisdiction.

The Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) will coordinate the deployment of state assets to assist the FBI or local jurisdictions. This will include DPS specialized support and other state assets to include the National Guard (see Item Number 17 below).

The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) is the coordinating agency for public health emergency response in Arizona, including, biological testing of suspicious material. All suspicious material (letters, powders, etc.) must be processed for confirmation at the ADHS Laboratory. Until further notice, there are **no** other laboratories in Arizona, which are authorized to conduct bioterrorism-related environmental testing. All materials from suspected bioterrorism incidents must be handled as criminal evidence. Materials delivered to the ADHS Laboratory may be tested for one or more biological agents, as requested by law enforcement or as the need is otherwise determined.

ADHS, DPS, and FBI recommend AGAINST the use of commercial hand-held assays by first responders to evaluate and respond to an incident involving unknown powders suspected to be anthrax or other biological agents. Biological agent field test kits are at this time, not sufficiently accurate for on-scene decision making in the field, due to both false negative and false positive results associated with field assays. There are no examples of biological exposure where decision-making cannot wait for the results of validated laboratory procedures.

PROTOCOLS:

1. Confirm that there is a legitimate threat or a suspicious substance, on site, in the envelope or package. Not all reports of suspicious powdered substances will be legitimate threats. Law enforcement response officials (local law enforcement, DPS, and/or FBI) are responsible for conducting a threat assessment and determining prioritization for testing. Not all responses will require testing, and not all samples collected will be given priority testing status. If requested by law enforcement, samples will be held without testing, pending further investigation. Testing will always be conducted, however, if a request is made by one or more of the following agencies: DPS, ADHS, FBI, local law enforcement, or a local health department.
2. If a package is suspected to contain an explosive device a separate protocol will be in effect. Packages will be handled and dealt with as explosive devices. Personnel trained in explosives ordinance will be required to respond to suspicious packages to evaluate and render them safe prior to examination by hazardous material trained personnel. Requests for DPS Bomb Technicians will be routed through the DPS Duty Office at 602-223-2212 on a 24/7 basis.
3. Contact local law enforcement to inform them of the incident and to request their response.
4. Upon notification of a terrorist threat or incident, the local agency having jurisdiction should respond following local protocols and control access to the site. Do not directly handle, touch, smell, or otherwise closely inspect any suspicious powder or other unknown substances.
5. State and local health department officials should be involved in the health risk assessment and decision-making process for decontamination, testing and treatment. **Contact your county health department or the Arizona Department of Health Services.** Note: Tribal entities should notify the county health department in which the incident occurred.
6. Limit the number of persons exposed (limit handling).
7. Utilize the appropriate level of personal protective equipment for emergency workers during containment and collection, as defined by Hazardous Materials personnel.
8. Collect the names and contact information of those exposed to the product. "Exposed" should include as a minimum, the individual opening the product and those within 6 feet of the product when it was opened.
9. If someone simply opened a letter claiming to contain anthrax, **full decontamination is not warranted.** Concerned "patients" should be instructed to thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water. If they touched their face or other body parts after examining the unknown product, they should wash that surface as well. With the advice of public health officials, removed

clothing that has contact with the substance will be collected and evaluated before return. All efforts will be made to return critical personal items. Do not collect unexposed personal items such as watches, keys, spectacles, wallets and purses, etc.

10. Health officials will evaluate the need for initiation of antibiotic prophylaxis. In almost all circumstances, **the decision to initiate prophylaxis can be delayed** until the presence or absence of biological agent is determined.
11. The local agency should immediately notify the AZ DPS Domestic Preparedness Command Center at **602-223-2680** with information regarding the potential case. A DPS Case Identification Number will replace previously issued PX numbers. If the local agency does not have the resources to respond, they should contact the DPS Domestic Preparedness Operations Center at **602-223-2680** for assistance. DPS will notify the FBI of all samples to be taken to the ADHS Laboratory. **All samples to be taken to the ADHS Laboratory for biological agent testing need to have a DPS case identification number assigned.** Should transport be requested, packages must be double bagged and placed in a sealed container such as a paint can or sealed protective hard package. *All cases are to be treated as evidence and should have a completed DPS property and evidence form completed which lists the agency name and phone number, officer's name, victim, other parties involved and description of the evidence to be examined.*
12. Prioritization on testing of samples will be made by DPS or FBI, who will notify the ADHS Laboratory on testing prioritization. ADHS is responsible for developing and maintaining the testing methodology and priority algorithm (i.e., samples with low threat priority, as determined by law enforcement, and containing no visible powder or suspicious substance, will receive lowest testing priority and the ADHS Laboratory will not use rapid testing methodology). Currently, the ADHS Laboratory is operational during normal work hours (8:00am to 5:00pm), 7 days a week. ADHS Laboratory personnel are on call after duty hours.
13. The priority for testing samples after duty hours is determined by DPS. If an agency obtains low priority evidence after duty hours, the agency should store the evidence in its agency evidence storage. DPS case numbers will normally be issued during business hours. A call back number will be required so that the case number may be issued the next business day. ADHS personnel will be called to duty based on the priority established by ADHS, DPS, and the FBI. The ADHS Laboratory Managers Pager number is **602-591-8683**.
14. If the FBI receives the call directly, they will notify the DPS Domestic Preparedness Operations Center. DPS will then notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency for first response and will issue a control number.
15. Testing results will be provided by ADHS to the originating law enforcement response agency that obtained the evidence (if such information is made available to ADHS), DPS, and the respective county health department. The originating law enforcement response agency needs to coordinate with the ADHS Laboratory on the return of samples to the owner and notify DPS. Samples will not be returned from the laboratory directly to individuals. Please contact the ADHS Laboratory at **602-542-1188** to arrange for release of evidence for pick up, or destruction of evidence.
16. **For Hospitals:** If a patient, who claims to have been exposed to a suspicious powder, and is seen at an emergency department, please contact your local health department immediately. Extreme measures such as decontamination, clinical sample collections, prophylaxis, and/or emergency room shut down are not warranted (except for decon of gross contamination). Public health will coordinate with public safety agencies to ensure collection and testing of any remaining specimens. If the patient brings the material to the emergency department, then place the material in a sealed plastic bag and call your local law enforcement to collect the sample for threat assessment and transport. If the patient has discarded the material, or is otherwise not available, then a further assessment of the risks should take place between the attending physician and the local public health representative.
17. **Civil Support Team (CST) Activation and Response Protocol:**
 - If the Incident Commander identifies a threat that warrants the activation of the 91st CST, the CST can be activated through the local emergency response dispatch system.
 - If called, the CST will respond to requests for assistance, but will immediately notify the DPS Duty Officer. DPS may respond, in conjunction with the CST, if warranted.
 - If field testing is requested, CST will conduct all-hazards testing (chemical, biological, and radiological). CST will only use **military** hand held assays for presumptive testing on a suspect biological agent. **All Samples** will go to the ADHS Laboratory, for confirmatory biological testing.
 - CST will collect samples only at the direction of the Incident Commander. The Incident Commander will ensure the law enforcement chain-of-custody is maintained.

If you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please call the DPS Domestic Preparedness Operations Center at **602-223-2680** or the Arizona Department of Health Services at **602-230-5871**. The Arizona Department of Health Services is responsible for the maintenance of these guidelines.

If you are interested in more information regarding terrorism, you may access the following web pages:

Centers for Disease Control Bio-terrorism Web Page
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/>

Arizona Department of Health Services Bioterrorism Web Page
<http://www.hs.state.az.us/phs/edc/edrp>

US Army Medical Research Chemical Casualties Management Web Page
<http://ccc.apgea.army.mil/Documents/RedHandbook/001TitlePage.htm>

US Army Medical Research Biological Casualties Management Web Page
<http://www.usamriid.army.mil/education/bluebook.html>

Arizona Division of Emergency Management Web Page
<http://www.dem.state.az.us/>